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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study, which is based on a survey of 116 Hispanic organizations in the United States, is threefold: (1) to explore the organizational background characteristics that might distinguish linguistically retentive from non-retentive organizations; (2) to determine whether there is any differential/ non-differential interest in language maintenance among diverse Hispanic groups; and (3) to ascertain whether language attitudes towards Spanish are differentially/ non-differentially defined at Mexican American, Puerto Ricans and Hispanic organizations at large. The data on all pertinent variables were gathered through mail questionnaires during the summer of 1976. Organizational background characteristics reflect distinctive settlement patterns and density of Hispanic sub-groups in this country. While the nativity status and age groups of the general membership of these organizations does not differ significantly by ethnic sub-group, the core membership does. Three fourth of the organizations surveyed claim as their main concerns the improvement of socioeconomic conditions and/or furthering of educational attainment among fellow ethnics, and one fourth also claim active concern for the preservation of their ethnic heritage. While nearly all associations espouse language maintenance, they differ in the justifications they advance in its favor. The behavioral manifestations of commitment to language maintenance are less pervasive than positive attitudes towards Spanish.
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HISPANIC ORGANIZATIONAL INTEREST IN LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

The vicissitudes of immigrant life, which arise from new customs, a new language, new socioeconomic pressures and opportunities, have repeatedly led individuals of similar ethnic background to come together for mutual assistance. As for many previous immigrant groups in the United States whose roots were in a non-urban ethnic community, for most Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans the ethnic organization represents a novel enterprise. Its novelty among such populations derives from their lack of experience with formal organizations and their lack of familiarity with consciously purposeful ethnolinguistic maintenance activities. Ethnic organizations have, consequently, been patterned either on non-ethnic models or on models brought by countrymen from urban centers, whose very ethnicity was that of a transmuted and selective nature rather than one based upon daily ethnic ways of life. As a result organizational interest in ethnocultural maintenance has represented a retreat from, and replacement of authentic ethnicity and the ethnic community, whereas ethnic mother-tongue retentiveness has concomitantly become bridgeable or forgettable (Fishman 1966).

The decrease of ethnolinguistic communities and their replacement by ethnic organizations holds largely for those communities and language groups stemming from earlier immigrant waves, but not for their more recent Hispanic counterparts as attested by their continued sociolinguistic saliency. It would, therefore, seem unlikely that Hispanic organizations represent a retreat from ethnicity to the extent that this holds true for other non-Hispanic ethnic organizations. Hispanic organizations would, consequently, appear to be more of a reflection than a replacement of the communities they serve, while ethnolinguistic maintenance would more probably derive from

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unreflective but persistent behaviour than from ideological concern occupying organizational efforts, as is generally the case among non-elitist recent immigrant groups.

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which Hispanic organizations do show an interest in language maintenance as attested both by language usage and attitudinal orientation towards Spanish; to determine the organizational background characteristics that might distinguish linguistically more retentive organizations from their less retentive counterparts; and to ascertain if any differential interest in language maintenance obtains among Puerto Rican, Mexican American and Hispanic organizations at large.

The data on all pertinent variables was gathered through mail questionnaires during the Summer of 1976. Three hundred organizations were randomly chosen from the Directory of Spanish Speaking Community Organizations, published by the Cabinet Committee on Opportunity for the Spanish Speaking 1970. The one hundred and sixteen responses obtained constitute the basis of this study.

Information was gathered regarding the background characteristics which in former studies were considered relevant to organizational linguistic retentiveness: location, scope, date of founding; ethnic background; frequency of meetings; general objectives; nativity status and relative age groups of the general and core membership (Fishman 1966).

Language usage patterns were obtained for the following organizational activities: large formal meetings, regular informal gatherings, and committee or board meetings. Language usage ratings were made on a five point scale ranging from only Spanish, mostly Spanish, as much Spanish as English to mostly and only English.

An organization's belief in and justifications of the importance of

linguistic and culture maintenance and determinants of language choice were elicited from content categories covering both instrumental and ideological features. If Spanish maintenance was rated as an important organizational objective, the addressee was asked to choose one of the given categories that best validated his organization's beliefs. The content categories validating linguistic retentiveness encompassed possibilities ranging from the purely functional aspects of language in communication to the potential value of language as a group symbol.

All pertinent data were subjected to contingency tests.

The associations surveyed differed in those background variables that reflected the distinctive settlement patterns and density of Hispanic subgroups in this country (Dinnerstein and Reimers 1975). The majority of Puerto Rican organizations are clustered in the Northeast, (80%). Hispanic organizations at large are mostly located on the West Coast, (39%) and in the Midwest (28%), whereas Mexican American organizations are concentrated on the West Coast, (60%) and in the Southwest, (33%). Whereas all Puerto Rican, (100%) and nearly all Hispanic organizations at large, (90%), are located in metropolitan centers, most Mexican American associations are to be found in urban but non-metropolitan settings, (83%).

TABLE 1 - GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Hispanic at large	Totals
North East	-	80%	16.7%	N(22)19%
West Coast	60%	10%	38.9%	N(52)44.8%
Middle West	6.7%	10%	27.8%	N(16)13.8%
South West	33.3%	-	16.7%	N(26)22.4%
Totals	N(60)51.7%	N(20)17.3%	N(36)31%	N(116)100%

The nativity status and age groups of the general membership among the organizations surveyed does not differ significantly by ethnic subgroup. The majority pattern is that of native born (53%) or generationally mixed membership composition (35%), although Mexican American associations tend to have the largest percentage of native-born members. By and large, organizational members tend to be over, rather than under thirty years of age, (63%).

Conversely, the nativity status of the core membership does vary by ethnic subgroup. The core membership among Puerto Rican organizations is almost as often eith island or mainland born. Among Hispanic orgenizations, officers and leaders are most often recruited jointly from native and foreign born members, whereas among Mexican American organizations they are largely native born.

TABLE 2 - NATIVITY STATUS OFFICERS AND LEADERS

	Mexican Americans	Puerto Ricans	Hispanic at large	Totals
Foreign Born	3.3%	40%	5.6%	N(12)10.3%
Native Born	80%	50%	38.9%	N(12)62.1%
Both, Native and Foreign Born	16.7%	10%	55.6%	N(32)27.6%
Totals	N(60)51.7%	N(20)17.3%	N(36)31%	N(116)100%

Organizational officers and leaders are generally over rather than under thirty years of age at Puerto Rican, (100%), Mexican American, (77%) and Hispanic associations at large (67%). The differences in nativity status among core members are attributable to the relative immigrational recency of each subgroup and their different preimmigrational background. Puerto

Rican and Hispanic immigrants at large, by comparison with their Mexican counterparts are more recent arrivals, more often of urban than non-urban procedence and of a somewhat higher educational status. They are, therefore, likelier to be capacitated to assume leadership functions within their ethnic groups than the less well-educated foreign-born from a non-urban background (Grebler et al 1970, Dinnerstein and Reimers 1975).

Puerto Rican, Mexican American and Hispanic organizations at large do not differ significantly by scope, size or decade of founding. The majority are local in scope (55%), with national and regional patterns following a close second, (21% and 24% respectively). The vast majority (70%) of all organizations are of recent vintage, having been founded in the last fifteen years. Small organizations, with less than a hundred members, are somewhat more frequent than larger ones, which claim over five hundred members (40% versus 35%). Most organizations, (72%), meet monthly, from which it may be concluded that they are actively engaged in their pursuits and that membership interaction is frequent.

Three fourths of the organizations surveyed claim as their main concerns the improvement of socioeconomic conditions and/or furthering of educational attainment among their fellow ethnics. In conjunction with these objectives, one fourth of the organizations also claim active concern for the preservation of their ethnic heritage. The number of organizations whose task is solely cultural fraternal or professional, is marginal.

In spite of the fact that Hispanic organizations are mostly geared towards the amelioration of social conditions, the vast majority (86%), strongly believe in the importance of linguistic as well as cultural maintenance without assigning priority to either component. While nearly all associations espouse language maintenance, they do differ in the justifications

they advance in its favor. Puerto Rican associations most often validate language usage and maintenance upon ethnic grounds, Spanish being viewed as their ethnic mother tongue and as expressive of their culture. Mexican American organizations are as likely to justify language usage and maintenance upon ethnic as well as non-ethnic considerations. Spanish is as often validated because it is an ethnic identity marker as well as because of the humanistic and educational values associated with bilingualism. Among Hispanic organizations at large, language usage and maintenance are legitimized almost exclusively by instrumental concerns. Spanish is used and to be retained mainly because of the functional needs of their members to communicate with one another.

The behavioural manifestations of commitment to language maintenance are less pervasive than attitudinal positiveness towards Spanish. Although there are ethnic subgroup differences in relation to language usage patterns, the total distributions of Spanish and English show that at both formal and informal meetings of the general membership both languages are claimed more often than solely Spanish.

TABLE 3 - LANGUAGE USAGE PATTERNS AT ORGANIZATIONAL EVENTS

	Only and Mostly Spanish	As much Spanish as English	Only or Mostly English
Large, formal Meetings	29.3%	34.5%	36.2%
Informal, regular meetings	27.6%	36.2%	36.2%
Committee or Board Meetings	27.6%	22.4%	50.%

Since the most frequently claimed determinant of language choice is of a

functional nature, (93%), -the linguistic facility of the speakers and the desire to reach the wides audience-, code-switching does not seem motivated by topic or metaphorical foregrounding. To the extent that is true, language choice would seem to reflect habitual behaviour rather than ideological concern or commitment derived from the potential symbolic values of the ethnic tongue.

TABLE 4 - FACTORS DETERMINING LANGUAGE CHOICE

	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Hispanic at large	Totals
Language facility of speakers	73%	50%	83%	73%
Genre to reach widest audience	18%	30%	17%	20%
Spanish as Language	7%	20%	—	7%
Totals	N(60)51.7%	N(20)17.3%	N(36)31%	N(116)100%

At committee or board meetings, English claiming increases substantially across all ethnic associations. This might be expected considering that Hispanic organizations are mostly concerned with the amelioration of socioeconomic conditions. Organizational leaders must, therefore, not only be validated within their respective ethnic communities but within the mainstream society as well. They must possess bilingual and bicultural skills probably exceeding those of the general membership in order to mediate successfully between the in and outgroups.

Differential Spanish/English claiming at all organizational events -large formal programs, informal gatherings and committee meetings- is associated with the nativity status and relative ages of the core and general

membership. Foreign born and generationally mixed members, and those above thirty years of age, contribute the most to Spanish claiming. This relationship holds true for all of the ethnic subgroups surveyed. At informal gatherings language usage is also partly determined by organizational objectives and membership size. Organizations whose objectives are cultural, professional and/or fraternal and which are smaller, tend to be linguistically more retentive than those concerned with socioeconomic and educational goals. Whether this is due to the different membership characteristics that might be associated with ethnic cultural/professional organizations cannot be unequivocally ascertained without additional background data. One may suspect, however, that cultural and professional organizations having more elitist concerns, might also have a more elite membership, and may thus be consciously and purposefully more retentive. No other organizational background variables were significantly associated with differential language claiming which may largely be motivated by the restricted range of variance in this sample. Differential language choice failed to be associated with any of the attitudinal variables described, except for the factors determining language usage. Functional determinants such as linguistic facility and the desire to reach the widest audience were consistently associated with higher English claiming, than ethnic considerations which were correlated with mostly Spanish claiming. Since only Puerto Rican organizations had a diversified range of variance on this question, the relationship does not hold for Mexican American or Hispanic associations at large.

TABLE 5 - LANGUAGE USAGE PATTERNS BY ETHNIC MEMBERSHIP

Large Formal Meetings

	Mexican Americans	Puerto Ricans	Hispanic at large	Totals
Only or mostly Spanish	23.%	40%	33%	29.3
As much Spanish as English	40%	30%	28%	34.5
Only or mostly English	37.%	30%	39%	36.2
Totals	N(60)51.7%	N(20)17.3%	N(36)31%	N(116)100%

Informal Regular Meetings

	Mexican Americans	Puerto Ricans	Hispanic at large	Totals
Only or mostly Spanish	20%	60%	20%	27.6%
As much Spanish as English	50%	10%	28%	36.2%
Only or mostly English	30%	30%	50%	36.2%
Totals	N(60)51.7%	N(20)17.3%	N(36)31%	

Committee or Board Meetings

	Mexican American	Puerto Ricans	Hispanic at large	Totals
Only or mostly Spanish	27%	40%	22%	27.6%
As much Spanish as English	30%	20%	11%	22.4%
Only or mostly English	43%	40%	67%	50%
Totals	N(60)51.7%	N(20)17.3%	N(36)31.%	

Spanish claiming is consistently higher among Puerto Rican organizations than among their Mexican American or Hispanic counterparts. The differences in linguistic behaviour among Puerto Rican, Mexican American and Hispanic associations arise from differences in membership characteristics and organizational objectives. The larger percentage of foreign born core and general members in Puerto Rican associations explains partly the higher Spanish claiming among them. Cultural and professional organizations, represented in this sample mainly by Puerto Ricans, further contribute to higher Spanish usage insofar as they seem to be more retentive than social action oriented associations.

Less easily explained are language usage differentials between Hispanic organizations at large and Mexican American associations. Hispanic organizations at large use English more frequently at all events than Mexican American associations in spite of the fact that the latter tend to have a larger percentage of native-born core and general members, and thus would be expected to claim more not less English.

TABLE 6 - NATIVITY STATUS GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Hispanic at large	Totals
Foreign born	3.3%	30%	16.7%	12.1%
Native born	66.7%	40%	38.9%	53.4%
Both, native and foreign born	30%	30%	44.4%	34.5%
Totals	N(60)51.7%	N(20)17.3%	N(36)31%	N(116)100%

Since the distribution of foreign and native-born core and general members remains roughly the same whether examined by ethnic subgroup or geographic

location, only geographic and metropolitan location can be invoked to explain differential language usage patterns between Mexican American and Hispanic associations at large, as they do not differ in other background variables. Geographic and non-metropolitan/metropolitan location does have an effect upon differential language claiming. Hispanic organizations at large are mostly located in the large metropolitan centers of the Mid West and West Coast where--excepting Los Angeles-- hispanic communities have been less homogeneous, less numerous, less salient, less frequently replenished by the influx of continued immigrant waves and less isolated than Mexican American communities in other setting on the West Coast or Southwest. Occupational patterns in large industrial centers and inner-city variation have historically been decisive factors in linguistic assimilation and ultimately in language shift (Lieberson and Curry 1972). Diversified occupational patterns in metropolitan centers, as opposed to small urban or rural areas, have encouraged and facilitated the acquisition of linguistic skills by bringing diverse groups together. Inner city heterogeneity further contributed to the acquisition of linguistic skills by diminishing the saliency of a particular ethnic group, thereby diminishing its spatial segregation from other groups. Spatial segregation, on the other hand, --whether at school, at work or in the neighborhood--, tends to be high in those settings that contain little ethnic diversity and in which a minority group is fairly numerous and homogeneous as is the case for Mexican American in many communities (Grebler et al 1970). The interacting social forces at work in ethnically diversified industrial centers, which have formerly played a significant role in linguistic assimilation among other non-English mother-tongue groups, must also have been at work among Hispanic subgroups in the same or similar settings, thereby explaining why language maintenance is weaker among Hispanic

than Mexican American associations, located in less heterogeneous, non-metropolitan areas.

In spite of the ethnic subgroup differences noted in relation to language retentiveness, language claiming by all organizations shows that Spanish maintenance remains relatively high. Its strength, however, seems to be primarily derived from linguistic facility or Spanish dominance of some of their members rather than from ideological concern or conviction among them. The most retentive justification advanced in favor of Spanish maintenance occurs among Puerto Rican associations, where Spanish is most often viewed as a link with, and expression of, ethnic identity. To the extent that language is associated with the will to retain ethnic self-maintenance, the role of Spanish is less dispensable and less readily forgettable than if it were perceived along more de-ethnicized lines.

Among Mexican American organizations Spanish language usage and maintenance are validated by both ethnic and non-ethnic arguments. Although Spanish is perceived by some as an ethnic identity marker, it is just as often valued because of humanistic and educational benefits. Inasmuch as Spanish is associated with the instrumental and educational values derived from bilingualism, the ethnic embeddedness of language maintenance fades. Once the ethnic matrix of language fades, the ancestral tongue becomes a second language and its maintenance becomes much more questionable (Fishman 1966).

TABLE 7 - JUSTIFICATIONS ADVANCED IN FAVOR OF SPANISH LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Hispanic at large
Symbol Ethnic Identity	45%	70%	12%
Educational Value	35%	10%	26%
Functional Needs of the Organization	20%	20%	55%
Spanish Unimportant	—		7%

The least affect and ethnicity invested perception of Spanish prevails at Hispanic organizations at large, where both language usage and Spanish maintenance are legitimized almost exclusively by instrumental considerations. Since little overt affective or symbolic value is attached to language, Spanish would seem to be totally dispensable once English proficiency or dominance prevailed among organizational members.

The decreasing association and/or perception between language and ethnicity that is observable going from Puerto Rican organizations - where the link between Spanish and group identity is most fully and most often articulated - to Hispanic associations - where it hardly occurs - may not be fully amenable to explanation. Nevertheless, several factors which have considerable bearing upon language attitudes may be invoked to account for some of differences noted. Puerto Rican associations claim the largest percentage of foreign born members. Generational distance alone accounts, to a considerable extent, for the presence or absence of an ethnically ideologized stance towards language (Fishman 1972). Ideological conviction and elaboration

on behalf of language most frequently occur among the foreign born, for whom the ethnic tongue is as a mother tongue as well. As a mother tongue it is embedded in deep-seated affective experiences from which emotional involvement and intensity derive. Increased generational distance decreases the probabilities of the ethnic tongue remaining a mother tongue, and thus both ideological elaboration and emotional fervor diminish among second and subsequent generations. External factors of a sociopolitical nature, may further alter the stance towards language among particular ethnic groups, regardless of immigrational recency or distance, thereby facilitating or hindering the articulation and/or elaboration of the symbolic value of language. Thus, the commonwealth status of Puerto Rico, and the co-equal official status accorded both Spanish and English in the island, may be additional contributing factors which facilitate for Puerto Ricans the claiming of Spanish as an ethnic tongue and identity marker.

The sociopolitical circumstances surrounding other Hispanic immigrants in the continental United States, on the other hand, may hinder rather than encourage a nationalistic posture towards Spanish in spite of immigrational recency. This would seem to be particularly true for Mexican Americans. Although the suppression of nationalism in the immigrant generation has not been a common experience in this country, among Mexican Americans nationalistic expressions have consistently been stifled. They have partly been stifled because of a generalized feeling that it was dangerous and unwise in the borderland United States to evoke Mexican solidarity for American goals (Grebler et al 1970). With the recent rise of the Chicano movement and Chicano nationalism a revaluation of Spanish does occur. Chicano nationalism, in the sense of ethnocultural identity, has, however, primarily stirred its elites and among these the native-born younger generations. The link

between language and ethnicity is, consequently not unequivocally articulated. In its search for authenticity, Chicano nationalism does not primarily emphasize the Iberic heritage, nor does it stress Mexico as the fatherland. Instead it underscores the Aztec heritage, and the locus of the Mexican American experience, the American Southwest, Aztlan. While it does seek to legitimize Spanish in domains other than those under private control, it is not always clear whether it does so primarily for functional reasons or because of its allegiance to Spanish as a self-contrasting component of ethnicity (Documents 1971, Gomez 1974). In view of all these factors, it would seem that an unabashed expression of the link between language and ethnicity is more problematic for Mexican Americans than Puerto Ricans.

Among Hispanic organizations at large, Spanish usage and maintenance are justified upon the functional usefulness of language in communication. The potential value of Spanish as a symbol of group cohesiveness, derived from the ethnocultural similarities among Hispanic subgroups, remains unarticulated. Although ethnolinguistic commonalities must play a role in the increased movement of different Hispanic groups working together for mutually beneficial ways, integrative bonds would seem to derive primarily from economic and political goals within the mainstream society. The need of Spanish as a symbol of cohesiveness is, thus, greatly diminished, and may, therefore, be unlikely to surface. Broader unity among ethnically similar subgroups generally motivated by economic or sociopolitical goals, need, furthermore, not be replacive of localistic attachments. The focus of attachment to the Spanish language and heritage among Hispanic subgroups, may, consequently, remain to be particularistic in nature, instead of undergoing redefinition along more encompassing transnational bonds of solidarity (Fishman 1972).

Although the present sample of Hispanic organizations is not likely

to be representative of all association, and therefore, does not lend itself to unequivocal generalizations, the following conclusions do apply to the data at hand. Spanish language maintenance at Hispanic organizations seems to be primarily a function of the immigrational recency and relative age of their members, to which the host setting makes an additional strong contribution, rather than of ethnic membership differences per se. Few other organizational background characteristics or attitudinal manifestations seem to distinguish the linguistically more retentive organizations from their less retentive counterparts. Smaller organizations, whose concern is solely cultural, professional or fraternal, do seem to be purposefully more retentive than larger organizations with more diversified aims. Conscious language maintenance, thus, appears to be essentially an elitist minority concern.

Language attitudes, on the other hand, are weaker predictors of language usage than other variables, as has repeatedly been shown by other studies (Fishman 1966, 1972, Shuy and Fasold 1973). Although non-attitudinal variables are more powerful predictors of linguistic choice, a strong positive attitudinal orientation towards language maintenance-- most often ideologically or symbolically elaborated--, tends to go hand in hand with more frequent ethnic-language usage.

Language usage patterns and their determinants at Hispanic associations seem to indicate that code-switching at organizational events responds primarily to linguistic facility of the interlocutors rather than to topic or metaphorical foregrounding. Thus the more bilingually proficient the individual, the less Spanish he would seem to use. This is particularly suggested by the linguistic behaviour of organizational leaders who across all ethnic subgroups use English with greater frequency than the general membership. Since organizational objectives are mostly social-action oriented,

chief officers and leaders would have to be both, linguistically and culturally, more assimilated than general members, inasmuch as their leadership must be validated not only from within their own ethnic communities but within the society at large as well. To the extent that they mediate successfully between the in and outgroups, they must possess considerable bilingual and bicultural skills. Biculturalism, however, is concomitant with de-ethnization. That the de-ethnization process is in fact at work is suggested by the nativity status most organizational officers and leaders who are native rather than foreign-born, as well as by the recent founding date of most associations. Thus even Hispanic organizations seemingly represent an incipient or progressive retreat from ethnolinguistic authenticity, which may or may not be a reflection of a similar ongoing process within their respective communities.

Accordingly, the future of language maintenance among the organizations surveyed is far from certain. Although Spanish claiming remains relatively high in spite of generational distance, language choice is based predominantly upon functional criteria. There seem to be few if any constraints upon code-switching derived from a strong ideological conviction or commitment to Spanish, which could delay the ultimate switch to English. While a strong retentivist rational based on ethnic grounds is advanced in favor of Spanish maintenance, the identification between language and ethnicity, language and intragroup solidarity, is, however, not the norm. Not more but most often, Spanish usage and maintenance are validated by functional and humanistic considerations, which relegate the ethnic tongue to the status of a second language. To the extent that these attitudes do prevail overtly and covertly, Spanish could become some day as forgetable and dispensable as any other second language.

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